DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 139 688 SO 010 017

AUTHOR Seller, Maxine S.
TITLE Success and Failure in Adult Education: The Immigrant Experience 1914-1924.
PUB DATE Apr 77
NOTE 27p.; Paper presented at Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New York, New York, April 3-8, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Education; Adult Programs; *Adult Students; American Culture; Cultural Differences; *Educational History; Educational Needs; Educational Problems; Educational Programs; Ethnic Studies; Failure Factors; *Immigrants; Nonformal Education; Program Effectiveness; *Program Evaluation; Relevance (Education); *Sociocultural Patterns; Success Factors; United States History

ABSTRACT

The educational experience of adult immigrants to the United States between 1914-24 is discussed. Attempts of educators and Americanization agencies to reach adult immigrants are described and reasons for the failure of these attempts are given, including inadequate funding, narrowness in subject matter and methods, and insensitivity to ethnic cultures. Educational needs of immigrant adults are identified as a desire to learn to speak and read English as a tool for earning a living, to read and write their native language in order to increase knowledge about their own traditions, and to obtain the elements of a liberal education which had been available in the old country only to the privileged few. Nonformal education of adults in immigrant communities succeeded where American educators failed because it was planned and executed by immigrants through lodges, unions, churches, theaters, ethnic press, and other institutions. Respecting native languages and traditions, these groups addressed not only Americanization but a broad spectrum of economic, cultural, and intellectual interests. Information is provided on activities of the immigrant institutions generally, and examples are offered on specific ethnic groups including Ukranians, Poles, Lithuanians, Jews, Finns, Greeks, Armenians, Hungarians, and Italians. References are included. (Author/DB)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED139688

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Success and Failure in Adult Education

The Immigrant Experience 1914-1924

by

Marvine S. Seller

SO 010 017

MAY 4 1977

SCOPE OF INTEREST NOTICE
The ERIC Facility has assigned this document for processing to: SO CE
In our judgement, this document is also of interest to the clearinghouses noted to the right. Indexing should reflect their special points of view.

Success and Failure in Adult Education

The Immigrant Experience 1914-1924

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries millions of Southern and Eastern European immigrants left their homes to enter a rapidly urbanizing and industrializing United States. Stimulated by the current interest in the education of minority children, historians in recent years have explored the public school experiences of the children of these immigrant communities.[1] This paper will explore the educational experience of immigrant adults. Most immigrants were adults at the time of their arrival. Of the 2,953,000 non English speaking immigrants reported in the census of 1910, 2,565,612 were over twenty years old, well beyond the reach of the compulsory public education laws.[2]

The educational needs of the adult immigrant population were great. Many came from rural areas such as southern Italy, where educational opportunities were few. Members of politically and culturally oppressed ethnic groups such as the Ukrainians, the Poles, the Lithuanians, and other minorities in the Russian, Turkish, Austro-Hungarian, or German Empires were not allowed to educate their children in their native languages and culture.[3] Thus many immigrant adults arrived illiterate or semi-literate in their own languages and unschooled in their own cultural heritage. Others had years of formal education that was irrelevant to the demands of modern industrial life. Many Jewish males, for example, arrived deeply learned in traditional Jewish law and literature but ignorant of modern science, mathematics, or geography.[4]

Immigrant adults had three different kinds of educational needs. First, most wanted to learn to speak and read English as a tool for earning a living

in the new country, and most of those who planned to remain in the United States permanently wanted to learn enough about American civic life to become citizens. Second, many were eager to learn to read and write their native languages, to increase their knowledge of their own traditions. Such education would fulfill the frustrations of past educational deprivation for suppressed nationalities and would enable immigrants to participate more meaningfully in their own ethnic communities, often the only focus of social identity available to them in the United States. Finally, many wanted to taste the broader culture that in the old country was available only to the privileged few--philosophy, science, art, literature, history, politics--the elements of a liberal education.[5]

This paper will examine the ways in which the educational needs of immigrant adults were met. It will demonstrate that a massive effort by American educators to reach the immigrant adult population between 1914 and 1924 was a failure and will explore some of the reasons for this failure. It will then demonstrate that educational programs within the immigrant communities themselves during this same period were much more successful and will explore the reasons for this success.

Efforts of the native born to educate the immigrant adult did not begin in 1914, of course. Night schools and settlement houses were active in such endeavors in the closing decade of the nineteenth century. Their motives varied from altruistic desire to help the foreign born adjust and succeed in their new country to an ethnocentric desire to exercise social control over an unruly lower class and, by "improving" them, to safeguard the American way of life. Between 1914 and 1924 new fears generated by World War I and by the Russian Revolution catapulted the movement to educate the adult immigrant from the concern of a few organizations and individuals to a national obsession. Non-English speaking and

non-naturalized immigrants, whether from countries on the "right" side of the war or the "wrong" side, were suddenly feared as potentially disloyal "hyphenated Americans." Industrial as well as political fears--first of wartime sabotage and then of Bolshevism, added to the frenzied demand for adult immigrant education by Americans who believed that education could ward off treachery and subversion.[6]

This emotional wartime atmosphere produced new "100 per centers" (fanatical Americanizers) who joined forces with the settlement house workers, ministers, and other educators to launch a massive campaign to get every non-English speaking or non-naturalized immigrant into a classroom. Established organizations such as the North American Civic League for Immigrants, the Immigrants Protective League, the California Commission of Immigration and Housing, the YMCA and the YWCA, local chambers of commerce, and women's clubs stepped up their activities in the area of immigrant education and new groups such as Frances Keller's Inter-Racial Council and the National Americanization Committee and federal agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Education, the Department of Immigration and Naturalization, the Council of National Defense and the Committee on Public Information flooded the country with pamphlets, posters, and other materials. State legislatures passed enabling legislation for the formation of night schools throughout the country and some states required adults whose English was not up to a specified level to attend.[7] Industrialists in Detroit announced that they would not promote or, in some cases, even hire men who were not attending night schools or factory schools.[8] In Buffalo, twenty-thousand lapel buttons were distributed bearing the caption "I am making Buffalo a Christmas present. Ask me." The Christmas present was the enrollment in night school of one non-English speaking alien.[9]

The educational activities of night schools, factory schools, churches, and similar organizations varied, but their major thrust between 1914 and 1924, (even more than in the earlier years,) was English lessons for all, for men, citizenship training (with emphasis upon the virtues of democracy and capitalism) and instruction in the factories in work habits and safety, and for women lessons in hygiene, childcare, and American style cooking and homemaking. The activities and programs of the many private and public Americanization agencies have been capably described by in great detail by the individuals who organized them and by historians such as Edward George Hartmann, Robert A. Carlson, Gerd Korman, and Allen Davis.[10] Less well documented, perhaps, is the fact that the programs failed to attract and to hold their target populations.

Night schools were the most widespread and widely touted agencies for the education of immigrant adults, yet at the peak of the movement after massive public relations campaigns by the early 1920's, , they had reached only a quarter of a million alien adults out of a target population of almost fourteen million.[11] The results were badly distributed as well as meager. Though men usually had more out-of-school opportunity to learn English than women, there were three times as many men as women enrolled in night schools.[12] The states with the greatest need for immigrant education did not always make the greatest efforts. New York State, first in need, was third in performance; Illinois, sixth in need, was twenty-first in performance, and Wisconsin, eleventh in need was twenty-seventh in performance.[13]

The general expansion of night schools in the early decades of the twentieth century should not obscure their failure to educate the vast majroity of immigrants. Most night school students were old stock Americans or the American born children of immigrants. In 1915 Buffalo, New

York had a foreign born population of 118,687 (over half the population of the entire city), of whom over thirty thousand could not speak English and almost eleven thousand were illiterate even in their native language. Yet of the 14,316 students enrolled in 1914-1915, fewer than two thousand were immigrants. In the next few years efforts to enlist the foreign born in night school continued, but as America entered the war enrollment actually dropped to half of the earlier figure "on account of excessive overtime demanded of the men at the plant." At this point, a massive campaign, including the lapel buttons already mentioned, was launched, using the press, the schools, the churches, the women's clubs, the business community to increase enrollment. The campaign was a failure. Only a hundred and twenty new immigrants were registered--an increase of about eight percent.[14]

Other cities shared Buffalo's lack of success. Chicago, home of Immigrant Protective League (one of the most active proponents of immigrant education) had a non-English speaking population of over 200,000 in 1917; but only 17,613 were registered for night school. Three years of intensive educational effort make no difference. By 1920 the unnaturalized population of the city had grown to 300,000, yet the combined efforts of the city's sixty-five different Americanization agencies had reached only 25,000, including 1500 men in factory classes and 400 women in mother's classes.[15] In smaller communities the situation was often worse. In 1925, Toledo, Ohio, reported a total night school enrollment of 247, not all of whom were foreign born, including only seventeen women.[16]

Meager as these figures are, they are a gross overstatement of the actual numbers of immigrants in night school, because the drop out rates were very high. In Chicago only seven percent of the night school pupils attended as many as seventy out of an eighty session term, while almost

one out of four attended fewer than twenty sessions.[17] These figures are for all night class populations; among the foreign population they were worse. Over eighty percent of the immigrant women who entered the highly praised educational program instituted by the Home Teachers Act of 1914 did not complete the program.[18] This experience was typical, not exceptional. According to John Daniels, author of a Carnegie Corporation study of Americanization, "the great majority of public evening school classes in English and civics for adult immigrants, though they start with a large enrollment, dwindle to small proportions or die out altogether."[19]

Secular settlement houses were sometimes able to reach Churches, YMCA's, and other private agencies reached even fewer immigrant women, largely through clubs rather than formal classes. Many of the women who participated in settlement house programs were the native born or those who already spoke English fluently--not the population the Americanizers hoped to reach. Settlement attempts to reach immigrant men were almost always fruitless. According to one of the most experienced settlement workers in the country, "the subject of settlement men's clubs and that of Arctic orange groves have this in common, that not only are their data somewhat meager and indefinite, but the evidence at hand appears to show that neither is at present in a conspicuously flourishing condition."[20]

Contemporary observers and later historians have identified many reasons for the failure of American educators to reach the adult immigrant population. Immigrant fatigue,[21] inappropriate materials,[22] inconvenient locations and scheduling,[23] inability of instructors to speak immigrant languages,[24] lack of understanding of immigrant cultures,[25] and the condescending, patronizing attitudes of many American educators toward their prospective students,[26] and American refusal to allow immigrants to participate in planning their own educational experiences[27] were major

components of this massive failure in adult education. Religious, ideological and political factors also played a role. Catholic and Jewish immigrants distrusted the educational efforts of Protestant churches and agencies such as the Salvation Army and the YMCA, fearing real or imagined proselytizing. Workers involved in unions or in socialist organizations distrusted Americanization education because they recognized its links to the interests of big business.[28]

Ironically, the war itself, which had sparked the massive campaign for adult education, helped defeat that campaign. The booming industrial wartime economy encouraged immigrants, for patriotic and economic reasons, to spend more hours at work, leaving fewer hours for schooling. Industrialists who tried to make attendance at Americanization classes a prerequisite for employment were defeated by the labor shortage; recalcitrant workers could find employment elsewhere. Finally, increased involvement with the fate of their native lands during the war heightened many immigrant's awareness of emotional ties to the old world; to such immigrants the enthusiastic Americanization campaigns of the "100 per centers" were unpleasantly reminiscent of "Russification," "Magyarization" and other European attempts to suppress their cherished languages and cultures.[29]

One frequently overlooked reason for the failure of the educational campaign of 1914-1924 was the fact that resources fell far short of rhetoric. In 1917, 1919, and 1920 Congress refused to pass bills appropriating even modest sums for immigrant education. Between 1919 and 1921 many states passed laws permitting, or requiring, local communities to provide such education but usually offering little more than token financial support.[30] Financially strapped local communities hesitated to assume the responsibility. Nor were private agencies necessarily more generous. In 1919 the National

Conference on Americanization in Industry expressed its support of Americanization classes in factories--provided that public school systems assumed the reponsibility of paying the teachers and that employees attend on their own time, without compensation from the company.[31]

Most important of all, the massive educational programs of 1914-1924 failed to attract and hold their target population because, arising from an atmosphere of fear of immigrant "foreignness" and radicalism, they concentrated almost exclusively upon the teaching of the English language, civics, the "American way of life." Immigrants defined education more broadly than the Americanizers. They wanted knowledge of their native language and heritage as well as that of Americans. They were interested in industrial and homemaking education, as the American educators assumed, but they were also interested in learning about art, philosophy, science, politics, history, literature and economics. These needs were met by the immigrant communities.

Immigrant communities succeeded where American educators failed because they provided education planned and executed by immigrants themselves, or by second generation members of the ethnic communities, taught in immigrant languages in ways that did not violate immigrant cultural traditions, located in and sponsored by institutions immigrants knew and trusted--the lodge, the church, the union. Most important of all, immigrant communities succeeded where American educators failed because their programs addressed not only "Americanization," but also the entire spectrum of immigrant's varied cultural and intellectual interests.

The ethnic neighborhood itself was filled with informal but very effective educational institutions. The Finnish boarding house, the Greek or Armenian coffee house, the local candy store, the ubiquitous corner saloon--these and similar natural gathering places serve informal classrooms where "oldtimers" taught newcomers a few basic English words, how to get a job, where to find

help in case of illness or other crisis, which local politician could be relied upon for which kinds of services, and which American laws were enforced and which could be broken with impunity. The night school taught American ideals; the saloon keeper taught American realities. This, in addition to the more convivial atmosphere, explained his greater ability to attract and hold an audience.

More formal institutions provided more formal educational opportunities, and every community had many of these--lodges, athletic societies, nationalist societies, cultural societies, musical and liberary circles, political organizations, women's organizations of many kinds, cooperatives, theatres, unions, and churches. Membership was in itself an educational experience. Conducting meetings, participating in elections, serving as officers, planning programs, conferences, and political activities on a local, regional, or national level--all were important learning experiences for the many foreign born men and women who participated. Although the individual's dues were usually small, large organizations handled substantial amounts of money, the management of which provided many lessons in practical economics.

Some immigrant organizations were specifically educational in purpose, such as the literary societies and debating societies. In many of these organizations the better educated immigrants shared their knowledge with the less well educated, the American born or earlier immigrants with the more recent arrivals. The Hebrew Literary Society of Philadelphia, for ~~example,~~ brought in professors from the local colleges and universities to lecture on religious, political, and scientific subjects, sponsored debates in Yiddish for those who spoke no English, and maintained a library in Hebrew, Yiddish, Russian, German, and English.[32] The Finnish-American Literary Society encouraged its members to write as well as to read.[33]

The Hungarian community in New YArk City created an institution apparently modelled after the popular American lyceum. The Hungarian Free Lyceum was organized to "further the education and political knowledge" of the Hungarian community to "acquaint them with American customs and institution." Here Hungarian-Americans attended lectures in Hungarian or English on topics dealing with their own background, such as "Modern Hungarian Poets" and "Industrial and Social Transformation of Europe;" on American history and geography; and on topics of current interest such as "The Waterfront and Transportation System of Our City," "The Influence of the Press," "Industrial Hazards," and "Problems of the Education of the Future." The Hungarian Free Lyceum attracted members of the community at large as well as Hungarian-Americans. It catered to recent immigrants with special lectures on Americanization and naturalization. Significantly, such lectures came at the end, not at the beginning, of the academic season, when the immigrant audience had already been attracted by other kinds of offerings.[34]

Another educational experiment within the immigrant community was "the Polish University" established in Chicago around 1910 and still functioning a decade later. Begun by a group of about fifty Polish socialists as an attempt to reach the new immigrant working class population, its original program consisted of lectures on Polish history and on the present problems and future prospects of Poland. Gradually the program expanded to meet a variety of educational interests. By 1920 the university had two hundred paid subscribers, and its special lectures held in a public park, attracted as many as a thousand people at a time. The nature of this university and the reasons for its success are revealed in the following account by one of the founders:

> Some Americans think...that we immigrants can comprehend only such thoughts as 'I see a cat; the cat is black'--as the teachers in the evening schools make grown men repeat. But the minds of most immigrants are not so feeble as that. For the poor man, America is all work-work-work. We believe in work, all right, but we want thought and education to go along with it. So we took up questions about the beginning of things--the creation of the world, the theory of evolution, primitive man, the development of language....All the lectures were in Polish....Obviously the use of Polish was necessary if such subjects, which are hard enough to grasp, anyway, and which involve many scientific terms and fine shades of meaning, were to be got across to our audiences.
>
> Gradually...we came to subjects connected with America and with civic problems. But here we do more than have lectures. We go and see for ourselves how civic agencies work. At different times we have visited most of the public departments and institutions of this city. Every little while we take a week-end excursion to some city--not far away and see how things are run there....
>
> ...."We Socialists have not tried particularly to spread our propaganda. Less than half of the paying members are socialists, and most of the people who attend the lectures are not. We haven't preached "Americanization," either... (but) if what America wants is people who can think and act for themselves, then we're doing Americanization.[35]

While the Polish University promoted Americanization and naturalization only indirectly, between 1915 and 1925 many immigrant communities formed special organizations, often called "Citizens Clubs" devoted solely to those purposes. The relatively modest community of Brockton, Massachusetts had an active Lithuarnian Citizen's Club of three hundred members. Ukranians in Philadelphia, Portuguese in New Bedford, Syrians in Boston, and other groups organized societies to conduct citizenship classes within their own communities. The activities of such societies were often remarkably successful. An Italian Club in Richmond, Virginia was instrumental in nationalizing hundreds, so that by 1920 all but a small percentage of the Italian population of the city had become naturalized. A Greek Club in Nashville, Tennessee experienced similar success.[36]

Organizations, formed primarily to serve non-educational purposes, often had strong educational components. Fraternal lodges, mutual benefit

societies, and athletic and cultural groups were broadly educational, promoting knowledge of the homeland, general education, and Americanization in varying proportions and with varying methods. The Yiddish Workmen's Circle, a national labor oriented mutual benefit society with 250 locals in New York City alone sponsored educational lectures, debates, and theater presentations many written by their own members, and distributed its own educational materials, and assisted its members with the naturalization process.[37] The largest Italian fraternal order, the Sons of Italy with 125 lodges in Chicago alone had special officials called "orators" to give lectures and help members learn English and become naturalized.[38]

The largest immigrant organizations were the National Alliances--many of which combined the functions of mutual benefit societies with the pursuit of nationalist political aims such as the restoration of the independence of the homeland--and the furthering of a wide variety of educational objectives in the United States. These organizations often kept alive the language and history and culture of the homeland while helping members adjust to their new environments. The publications, meetings, school, lectures, and other educational activities of the nationalist societies reached hundreds of thousands. The Polish National Alliance alone had a membership in 1921 of more than 125,000 in 1920.[39]

Women's groups were active in educational programs, both as auxiliaries to men's organizations and independently. For example, the Italian Women's Club of Albuquerque, New Mexico started an English language school for its members in 1923.[40] The Lithuanian Women's Alliance in Chicago refused to allow its members to participate in its popular mutual benefit society unless they also participated in its educational program, which included English lessons and homemaking.[41] The first issue of the official magazine

of the Ukrainian Women's Alliance contained articles on childcare, hygiene, and on the Women's Suffrage Movement, urging women to take a greater interest in politics.[42]

Singing and instrumental music societies encouraged knowledge of the language and cultural traditions of the homeland. Such organizations were widespread and long lasting and cut across age and class. Buffalo New York had three Polish singing societies involving hundreds of people before the turn of the century. Gymnastic societies such as the German Turn Verein, the Bohmian Sokol, and the Polish Falcons sponsored singing and dramatics, lectures and libraries, as well as gymnastics, and encouraged naturalization and American political activity. The national Turn Verein body, (with 194 constitutent societies each with up to 450 members) insisted that all its new members be citizens or in the process of becoming citizens.[43]

One of the most important educational institutions in many immigrant communities was the theater. There were hundreds of amateur ethnic theaters throughout the nation. Many were sponsored by cultural or athletic societies, ethnic churches, or settlement houses, or unions. Finnish, German, Hungarian, and Jewish workers formed theater groups to educate fellow workers about industrial problems. In large cities the Chinese, German, Italian, Hungarian and Jewish communities sponsored commercial theaters that performed regularly and went on tour to smaller population centers throughout the country. Chicago had three professional Italian theaters; the lower East Side of New York had five Jewish theaters.[44] Much of foreign language theater was purely for the purpose of entertaining. Yet there was also educational value. Every ethnic theater produced the classics of its own traditional culture. Italian theaters performed the Great Italian operas and German theaters produced works by Schiller and Goethe. Every

ethnic theater produced historical dramas; Jewish theatergoers saw plays portraying Biblical events, German theatergoers saw productions about Napoleon or Frederick the Great, and Chinese theatergoers saw histories of the succession of imperial dynasties. Italian, German, and Yiddish theaters produced not only their own literary classics, but also translations and adaptations of plays of Moliere, Schiller, Tolstoy, Shakespeare, Zola, Ibsen, and Molnar. Many immigrants considered theater such a necessary part of their lives that they would go without meals to save the pennies for a ticket. Thus for immigrants of widely varying degrees of education, from the intellectual to the illiterate, from every age group and special class, theater was an important educational experience.[45]

Two institutions which, though not intrinsically ethnic, were functionally so in many neighborhoods were the labor movement and the church. Both of these were active in immigrant education. Most immigrant workers, like most other American workers, were not unionized, but in specific areas such as the garment industries of New York City or the stockyards of Chicago, the union could be an enormously important educational influence. In unions with mixed ethnic memberships, the mastery of English was stimulated by the immigrant's desire to participate in the business of the union. In the ethnic locals, where business was conducted in Yiddish, Italian, Polish or another language, union officials encouraged members to learn English and to become naturalized.[46]

Italian and Jewish dominated garment unions of New York and New Jersey undertook extensive educational programs, that included informal reading rooms, movies, lectures and plays as well as formal classes in English, public speaking, economics, history, and literature. The International Ladies Garment Workers Union cooperated with the Women's Trade Union League

and a number of institutions of higher learning, such as Bryn Mawr College and the University of Wisconsin to set up summer schools for working women, many of them foreign born. The curriculum was broad, emphasizing the social sciences and the humanities.[47] The Finnish Socialists, affiliated with the International Workers of the World, operated the Work People's College in Duluth, Minnesota, where young workers, again many of them foreign born, studied not only labor history, theory, and organizational tactics, but also a broad curriculum of social and physical sciences and humanities.[48] The numbers who attended labor sponsored educational programs were not great, but many of those who did attend were profoundly influenced by the experience.

Like the labor movement, the Catholic Church was, in theory, an international institution but, like the labor movement, it often found itself in practice an ethnic institution. Catholic Churches in ethnic parishes often fostered knowledge of the traditional immigrant language and culture as a method of strengthening religious loyalty. During the early years of southern and Eastern European immigration, the Catholic Church was cautious in its approach to Americanization education, fearing that too rapid assimilation would weaken religious ties. Individual parishes did undertake Americanization work, however. For example, in 1914 the Polish church in Chicago sponsored the "King Casimir the Great Polish Citizens Club" which conducted English classes, guided hundreds through the naturalization process, and concerned itself with local civic improvements.[49]

After the United States entered World War I, the Social Action Department of the National Catholic War Council launched the first official nationwide drive for Americanization under Church auspices. The Social Action Department prepared a special textbook modeled on the familiar religious catechism.

Titled Civics Catechism on the Rights and Duties of American Citizens, the widely distributed test was translated into twelve immigrant languages with parallel English translations. The Department also provided local parishes with materials for Americanization classes, including motion pictures (with subtitles in immigrant languages and English), a guaranteed attraction. Under Church auspices, Americanization programs were launched even in remote rural or mining areas. Such programs were often successful because the Church was a trusted and familiar institution which recognized and stressed the value of traditional language and culture and was not associated with radical Americanization. Indeed, wherever possible churches, like labor organizations, used instructors familiar with the language and traditions of the prospective students. In San Francisco in 1921 a church sponsored civics program was taught by Italian speaking lawyers to an enrollment of 787 Italian immigrant men and women.[50]

Undoubtedly, the single most influential educational force in the immigrant community, more influential than the Church, the labor movement, or any single organization, was the foreign language press. In 1920 the foreign language press was conservatively estimated to have a circulation of 7,608,407; other estimates ran as high as ten million.[51] Even the latter estimate failes to suggest the full impact of the ethnic press, however, because copies were passed from hand to hand and were read aloud in family groups, in taverns, in boardinghouses, and in sweatshops, reaching even the illiterate and the most impoverished.[52]

In urban centers such as New York or Chicago, large immigrant communities supported dozens of papers, while no ethnic group--the Letts, the Estonians, the Wends, the Spanish Catalong--was too small to have at least one. Ethnic papers varied as the communities they served; some were local, some national; some were the organs of various organizations, others were independent commercial ventures.

There were literary papers, humerous papers, and papers catering to the special interests of farmers, musicians, socialists, anarchists, trade unionists, feminists, and other various religious factions.

The most vital educational function of the foreign language press was the promotion of literacy. Many immigrants first learned to read their own native languages by spelling out the large type and simple words of the headlines and advertisements and then moving on to the more complicated features, news, and editorials. Recognizing that much of their public was semi-literate, many editors kept their material deliberately simple, "chewed over, as for a baby," said one.[53]

The immigrant press attracted its audiences with materials on the homeland and, more important, news of the immigrant community in America--news about themselves. The better papers kept their readers informed about American life, especially American politics and economics, through skillful coverage of the national news. The socialist press especially important among Finns, Bohenians and Jews, organized the news within its own ideological framework, the framework of the all too familiar struggle for bread. According to sociologist Robert Park, the Socialist press made an enormous contribution by giving the common man a point of view from which he could think about the news and his life. "It made the sweatshop an intellectual problem."[54]

The editorial columns kept intellectuals up to date on the controversies of the day, as leaders of various political and economic and religious factions debated ideology and tactics. Of wider educational interest were the many practical articles on childcare, food, health, and how to obtain citizenship and register to vote. The Ukranian paper Svoboda published feature articles by Julian Chapka on the American legal system and the United States Constitution. Additional education about American life

came from advertisements of American goods and services and from the "letters to the editors" columns, which gave practical advice on making a living, getting along with family, friends, and employers, and coping with the demands of a new way of life.

Like other immigrant educational institutions, the press presented information on Americanization along with a variety of other kinds of educational matter. In the Yiddish press Abraham Cahan, Abner Tannenbaum, and other journalists introduced their reading public to Darwinism and other scientific ideas and to the science fiction of Jules Verne. A Lithuanian paper introduced its readers to Nietzche by publishing a translation of Thus Spake Zarathustra. Many ethnic papers featured fiction and poetry, much of it serialized the work of "hack" writers, but often including the works of talented members of the ethnic community itself and classics from the literary tradition of the homeland.

The impact of the foreign language press on the immigrant can scarcely be exaggerated. It is even more impressive because for most immigrants the experience of newspaper reading was a new one. Of 312 readers surveyed by a Russian newspaper, only sixteen had read newspapers in Russia. In the United States these immigrants had not only become faithful readers of the Russian language press, but two thirds were regular theatergoers (almost none had attended theater in Russia) and over a fourth were regular readers of the American press. Journalist Mark Villchur, who conducted the survey, concluded that

> "An interest in the (Russian) press creates an interest in the book, in the theater, and the whole outlook of the Russian in America widens. Not only his own interests and the interests of his family and of his circle become near and dear to him, but also the problems of his country, of the republic in which he resides, and, gradually, of the whole wide world."[52]

Education within the immigrant community was not free of problems. The fact that some organizations made participation in English and citizenship instruction a prerequisite for membership suggests that many prospective members were less than enthusiastic about such instruction. The quality of the many classes and countless special lectures offered by the various immigrant organizations ranged from excellent to bad; sometimes there was more enthusiasm than enlightenment.[54] Second generation ethnic Americans could be as condescending in their efforts to educate their more recently arrived ethnic countrymen as the most insensitive descendant of the Puritans.[57]

Still the conclusion is inescapable that immigrant institutions operating within the immigrant communities were far more successful at adult education between 1915 and 1925 than the official night schools and other Anglo-Saxon Protestant Americanizing agencies. During the same years that Anglo-Saxon America was conducting its intensive and, as already demonstrated, not very successful effort to Americanize immigrants, educational activities within the immigrant communities were expanding rapidly, partly in response to the pressure from Anglo-Saxon America and partly to meet internal needs. Political activity in the interest of "captive nation" homelands led to a great increase in membership in nationalist societies and an increased interest within those societies in education dealing with the history and culture of the homeland.[58] The war stimulated circulation of the immigrant press, increasing its effectiveness as an agency of mass education.[59] Finally, when the war was over, and the independence of long suppressed Eastern European nations reestablished, immigrants from these lands were faced with the deliberate choice of whether to reamin in the United States or return to their birthplaces. Many returned. Those who chose to remain in the United States, however, often did so with a new sense of permanent commitment that led to increased interest in English classes and citizenship programs.[60]

Between 1914 and 1924 the educational programs of immigrant cultural societies and unions reached tens of thousands, immigrant social and nationalist organizations reached hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, and immigrant newspapers reached many millions. The numbers reached were far greater than those reached by Anglo-Saxon Protestant Americanization agencies, and the contacts were more prolonged. Newspaper readers, theater-goers, church and union members, and loyal supporters of a variety of organizations were bound to these institutions by social, ideological, and emotional ties that made them much less likely to become "drop-outs." Finally, immigrant autobiographies suggest that not only was the educational impact of the immigrant community quantitatively great, it was also qualitatively intense. The widow of a Jewish immigrant continued his subscription to a Yiddish newspaper after his death, bringing the paper to his grave because it had meant so much to him during his lifetime.[61]

Excellent historical work has been done on the efforts of American institutions to educate and Americanize immigrants. More work needs to be done on the efforts of immigrants -- as individuals and as communities -- to educate and Americanize themselves. Adult immigrants were more than passive recipients -- or rejectors -- of American initiated educational programs; they were also the initiators of important programs of their own. Who initiated the programs, for what reasons, with what method, and with what result? How were these programs affected by ethnic, class, religious, and sex differences? More intensive study of these and other questions about education and Americanization carried on within immigrant communities may be useful not only to the historians of education, but also to educators planning ways to reach foreign born and native born adult populations today.

Notes

1. See, for example, David Tyack, The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1974; Diane Ravitch, The Great School Wars: New York City 1805-1973, Basic Books, Inc. New York 1974; Colin Greer The Great School Legend: A Revisionist Interpretation of American Public Education , Basic Books, New York 1972; and David K. Cohen, "Immigrants and the Schools," Review of Educational Research 40 , no. 1 (February 1970) 13-27.

2. Frank Thompson, The Schooling of the Immigrant, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1920, 30-31.

3. Robert E. Park The Immigrant Press and Its Control, Harper and Brothers, Publishers, New York 1922, 25-33.

4. Ibid. p. 105 . Park quotes Abraham Cahan, editor of the Jewish Daily Forward in an interview:
"Now if you take a German or Irish teamster...and you speak of the equator, or the North Pole...he understands you....But a Jewish intellectual does not know what the equator is. These intellectuals can discuss the most abstruse problems in philosophy, but they know nothing about geography; that is Gentile learning.

5. Timothy Smith "Immigrant Social Aspirations and American Education 1880-1930," American Quarterly 21: 523-543, no. 3 (Fall, 1969). See also John Bodnar "Materialism and Morality: Slavic-American Immigrants and Education 1890-1940" Journal of Ethnic Studies 3:4 (winter 1976) 1-17.

6/ John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 213-214.

7. The state of Utah required every alien between the ages of 16 and 45 who could not read, write, or speak English at a fifth grade level to attend night school. This and other state laws concerning Americanization education for adults are summarized in Edward George Hartmann, The Movement to Americanize the Immigrant, Columbia University Press, New York 1948, 237-252.

8/ "Working Plan of the Detroit Campaign," in Report of the Commission of Immigration and Housing of California, California State Printing Office, 1916, 128.

9. Edwin A. Rumball, Participating Americans: The Story of One Year's Work for the Americanization of Buffalo (pamphlet), Civic Education Association, Buffalo, May 25, 1918, 8.

10. For descriptions of adult immigrant education written by people involved in these projects, see Thompson, op. cit; William Sharlip and Albert Owens Adult Immigrant Education: Its Scope, Content, and Methods, The MacMillan Company, New York 1928; Peter Roberts, The Problem of Americanization, New York, The MacMillan Company 1920, Robert A. Woods, Americans in Progress: A Settlement Study of Residents and Associations of the South End House, The Riverside Press, New York 1903, and, for a representative compilation of articles from the periodical press and a bibliography, Winthrop Talbot, Americanization (Handbook Series), H.W. Wilson Company, New York 1917.

For accounts by historians, see Hartmann, op. cit; Robert A. Carlson, The Quest for Conformity: Americanization Through Education, John Wiley and Sons, Inc. New York 1975; Gerd Korman, Industrialization, Immigrants, and Americanizers: The View from Milwaukee, The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, 1967; and Allen Davis, Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement 1890-1914, Oxford University Press, New York 1967.

These works are mainly descriptive. In a work of 273 pages, Hartmann devotes only one paragraph to an assessment of the effectiveness of the programs. He admits that "...the number of immigrants who became Americanized along the formal lines advocated by the Americanization groups must have been small, indeed, when compared with the great bulk of their fellows who never saw the inside of an American schoolroom or settlement house." Hartmann attributes eventual 'Americanization to immigrants' contacts with native born Americans, ignoring the educational efforts of immigrant communities. (p.271).

11. Margaret D. Moore, Citizenship Training of Adult Immigrants in the United States: Its Status in Relation to the Census of 1920 (pamphlet), Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 1923, 3.

12. Ibid. , 4.

13. Ibid., 11.

14. Rumball, op. cit. 6-9.

15. Grace Abbott, The Immigrant and the Community, Century Publishing Co., 1917, reprinted in part in Talbot, op. cit. 225-232; and Frank D. Loonis, Americanization in Chicago (pamphlet), The Chicago Community Trust, Chicago 1920, 22-24.

16. Vernon M. Riegel, Adult Education in Ohio: Facts and Figures Issued by the State Department of Education (pamphlet), Columbus, Ohio 1925. See also Grace Abbott , The Educational Needs of Immigrants in Illinois,

Superintendent of Education Bulletin of the Immigration Commission #1 (Pamphlet) Springfield, Illinois 1920; and The Problem of Adult Education in Passaic, New Jersey (pamphlet), Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education Bulletin #4, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 1920.

17. Abbott, reprinted in Talbot, op. cit., 225.

18. Dr. Albert Shiels, Superintendent of Los Angeles Schools, Americanization (pamphlet), Los Angeles Examiner, Los Angeles, 1919, 30.

19. John Daniels, America Via the Neighborhood, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1920, 357-358.

20. William E. McLennen, social worker at Welcome Hall, Buffalo, New York, quoted in Daniels, Ibid, 194-5.

21. Abbott, reprinted in Talbot, op. cit. 226.

22. Herbert A. Miller, School and the Immigrant, Cleveland Educational Survey, Cleveland Foundation, Cleveland 1916, 91-94.

23. Abbott, reprinted in Talbot op. cit. 226. See also Sarah Moore, "The Teaching of Foreigners," Survey 24 , June 4, 1910, 386.

24. The Problem of Adult Education in Passaic, New Jersey, op. cit. 17.

25. Attempts to Americanize and educate south Italian women were often unsuccessful because they went against strong south Italian mores and traditions. For example, educators insisted on teaching personal hygiene, a subject these women did not discuss with strangers, and a YWCA pamphlet urged south Italian women to be "chums" with their children, when their culture dictated a much more formal relationship. See Virginia McLaughlin, Like the Fingers of the Hand: The Family and Community Life of First Generation Italian-Americans in Buffalo, New York 1880-1930, Dissertation, University of Buffalo 1970, 234-235 and Cecile L. Griel "I Problemi Della Madre in un Paese Nuovo (Pamphlet), National Board of YWCA in New York, 1919, reprinted in Italians in the United States: A Repository of Rare Tracts and Miscellanea , Arno Press, New York 1975, 37-40.

26. Tyack, op. cit. 22, 131-132. For a view from a national official involved in wartime Americanization work, see George Creel, "Hopes of hhe Hyphenate," Century V, 91, p.350, reprinted in Talbot, op. cit. 168.

27. Daniels, op. cit. ∅ 260.

28. Korman, op. cit. 142; Hartmann, op. cit. 140-146; Problem of Adult Education in Pasaic, New Jersey, op. cit. 19-20.

29. Carol Aronovici, "Americanization," American Academy of Political and Social Science Annuls XCIII (January 1921), 134. See also Rumball, op. cit. 12.

30. Higham, op. cit. 259-260: Hartmann, op. cit. 175, 231-232.

31. Proceedings of the National Conference on Americanization in Industry Nantucket Beach, Massachusetts, June 22-24, 1919.

32. Edmund James, editor, The Immigrant Jew in America, National Liberal Immigration League, New York 1907, 209.

33. John I. Kolehmainen, The Finns in America: A Bibliographical Guide to Their History, Finnish American Historical Library, Suomi College, Hancock, Michigan, 110-111.

34. Daniels, op. cit. 136-137.

35. Ibid. 137-139.

36. Ibid. 142-145.

37. Ibid. 140-141

38. Ibid. 150-151.

39. By 1925 the Croats had four national federations with 84,000 members, the Serbs had four with 20,000members. See Gerald Gilbert Govorchin, Americans from Yugoslavia, University of Florida Press, 1961, 109-122; Joshua Fishman Language Loyalty in the United States, Mouton & Co, the Hague, 1966, 337-338; and Joseph Wytrwal , America's Polish Heritage: A Social History of the Poles in America , Endurance Press, Detroit, 1961, 195-197.

40. Frederick G. Bohme A History of the Italians in New Mexico, Arno Press, New York 1975, 194.

41. Sophonisba Breckenridge, New Homes for Old, Harper & Brothers, New York 1921, 211-212.

42. Ibid. 216.

43. Daniels, op. cit. 129-131; Govorchin, op. cit. 122-124.

44. Park, op. cit. 129-130; Kolehmainen, op. cit. 111; Dominic J. Cunetto Italian Language Theater Clubs in St. Louis , Missouri 1910-1950, Dissertation, University of Florida, Gainsville, 1960) and Giovanni E. Schiavo, The Italians in Chicago: A Study in Americanization , Italian-American Publishing Company, 1928, 69-70.

45. David Lifson, The Yiddish Theat r in America, New York 1965; Walter Mattila, The Theater Finns, Finnish American Historical Society of the West, Portland, Oregon, July 1972; Lawrence Estavan, The Italian Theater of San Francisco, United States Works Progress Administration, North California District, San Francisco 1939.

46 Daniels, op. cit. 325-327.

47. Florence Hemley Schneider, Patterns of Workers Education: The Story of the Bryn Mawr Summer School, American Council in Public Affairs, Washington, D.C. 1941; Juliet Poyntz, "The Unity Movement: The Loul of a Union," Life and Labor, vol. 7, (June 1917)96-98.

48. Kristen Svanum "What Life Means to a Worker: The Story of the Winter Semester at the Work People's College," Industrial Pioneer, Vol IV (May 1926), p. 14-18.

49. Daniels, op. cit. 116.

50. Richard M. Linkh, American Catholicism and European Immigrants 1900-1924, Center for Migration Studies, Staten Island, New York 1975, 148-156.

51. American Newspaper Annualand Directory, N.W. Ayer & Son, 1920, 7.

52. Govorchin, op. cit. p 139.

53. Park, op. cit. 99.

54. Ibid. 108-109.

55. Ibid., 7-8.

56. Irving Howe, World of Our Fathers, Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, New York 1976, 238-244.

57. Ibid. 229-235.

59. Newspaper circulation not only rose during the war years, it continued to rise, reaching a peak in 1930.

60. Daniels, op. cit. 108-110.

61. Irving Howe records a similar anecdote of an elderly socialist who says "in my home the Forward was treated like the Bible. You didn't tear, cut, or muddy the pages of the Forward any more than you did the Torah." Howe, ibid., 528.